

DokuWiki for Worldbuilding

An Organizational Resource for Creators



Image: Vitalii Bashkatov

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*So many worlds, so much to do, so little done, such things to be.
— Alfred Lord Tennyson*

Fictional worlds abound in entertainment across a variety of media, from literature and comic books to film, television, and video games. In particular, works in the genres of fantasy and science fiction are often set in universes that are by some measure engineered; that is to say, in addition to generic concepts and themes familiar to the average reader, their fictional settings feature invented histories, geographies, technologies and cultures. Those familiar with the intricate mythology and constructed languages of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* or the complex history and politics underpinning Frank Herbert's *Dune* understand the higher level of reality a well-crafted fictional setting can add to a story.

Creators who set out to tell a story in an invented setting face a daunting task. In order to feel authentic or “lived-in,” a setting needs to showcase the same variety of details readers

encounter in their own world: slang and idioms, place names, food and drink, clothing styles, titles of books, et cetera. The more a fictional setting diverges from reality, the larger the role those tiny details play in lending that setting a feeling of authenticity.

A convincing fictional world is also consistent in its depth of detail. A shallow settling might be dubbed *window dressing*, a term that implies detail that—upon close examination—turns out to be only surface decoration. While window dressing might be sufficient for projects in which background details take a back seat to the narrative, characters, or (in the case of a game) play mechanics, for a project in which the setting is a vital part of its appeal, depth of detail improves the quality of the work as a whole.

But even the richest, most in-depth setting is useless if its myriad details aren't organized in such a way as to be easily referenced. As with any documentation project, good writing practices are central; techniques such as arranging topics hierarchically, cross-referencing them or making them sortable by tags enhance a user's ability to search for and update information. Well-constructed documentation serves as both a blueprint and reference for users, be they writers, artists, animators or game designers. The process of creating this kind of reference material for a fictional setting is called *worldbuilding*.

What is worldbuilding?

Worldbuilding is the process of creating a fictional setting from the ground up. While techniques vary as widely as the creators who use them, worldbuilding often involves constructing a setting's details in layers, using the broadest topics (such as history) as a foundation upon which more specific details (such as culture, economics or language) can be assembled. In order to be useful as a reference, the resulting topics—names, terms and events and their descriptions—need to be organized in a logical way, with links between different types of information—such as dates and historical events—in order to create context.

While generating comprehensive background material in a systematic fashion, a creator must draw upon a combination of skills, including researching, outlining, summarizing, defining terms and drawing connections. The best tools for worldbuilding are those that make these tasks as easy and efficient as possible.

Matching tools and technique

Every documentation project has its own complexities, but worldbuilding projects tend to have three primary considerations: *scope*, *depth*, and *consistency*.

- *Scope* refers to the number of topics.
- *Depth* refers to the amount of information under each topic. This can be as simple as descriptive text, or include images, headings, lists, tables, and links to other topics or outside sources.

- *Consistency* refers to the requirement that information remain accurate and up-to-date as the project expands, and when referenced from different sources.

Because these considerations vary from project to project, it is to a creator's advantage to use a system of organization that offers the maximum flexibility. And while there are many solutions available to the problem of keeping information organized electronically—including notetaking, “mind mapping” and productivity software—one of the cheapest, most flexible and easy to use is a *wiki*.

What's a wiki?

A *wiki* (from a Hawaiian word meaning “quick”) is a browser-based application for organizing information that takes advantage of the flexibility of hypertext and hyperlinks. A wiki divides a large document into a series of web pages, one for each key topic. Mentions of other topics on any given page are hyperlinked to the source pages for those topics. This style of dynamic cross-referencing enhances the consistency of the wiki's information (by providing a single source for each topic and reducing redundant information), as well as improving pages' inherent searchability. Both of these characteristics makes finding information in a wiki quick and easy.



Image: wikipedia.org

Wikis are designed to be created quickly, sometimes collaboratively, using simple text markup and editing tools. Media such as images, animations, sound and video files are easily integrated, as well as links to external sources. [Wikipedia](#) is probably the best-known and most widely used example of this style of documentation.

While there are numerous software products that provide a user with wiki-building capabilities, one of the least expensive (it's free!), flexible, and easy to use is an application called **DokuWiki**.

Meet DokuWiki

[DokuWiki](#) is open source wiki software developed in PHP by Andreas Gohr and distributed under the GNU General Public License (GPL) Version 2. It is free to use by non-commercial entities, and has many advantages over other products.

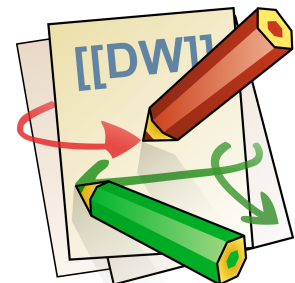


Image:www.dokuwiki.org

- DokuWiki doesn't require SQL, so no database configuration experience is needed in order to install or use it.
- DokuWiki's editor makes use of a [Markdown](#)-style syntax that enables the quick insertion of headings, lists, links, tables, images, and other basic layout elements during text entry.
- DokuWiki can be set up in minutes within a single directory, making it simple for a writer working on multiple projects to maintain a separate wiki for each one.
- DokuWiki is customizable and extensible using a wide array of free templates and plugins, each of which can be downloaded, installed and configured from within DokuWiki's administrative interface.

This document describes how to install, configure and use DokuWiki in the way most useful for creators undertaking worldbuilding projects.

While these instructions have been written for a beginning user with little or no technical skill, you should have experience using a web browser and be comfortable learning how to upload files, setting up pages on a web server (either remote or local), configuring software using a setup wizard, and using a simple text editor.



Image by [Christina @ wocintechchat.com](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Online or local?

Because DokuWiki runs as a collection of server-side scripts and web pages, it can be set up either online (in hosted web space) or on your local computer. How you choose to set it up will depend on your needs and resources. In both cases, the process is nearly identical, but each option has its own advantages and drawbacks.

Online

A wiki on hosted web space will be accessible from any device connected to the internet, and its pages can be shared with others. However, it will be inaccessible when you are offline.

Local

A locally-hosted wiki will be usable at any time, but only from the host device or (of properly configured) another device on the same local network.

Requirements

If you choose to create a local installation of DokuWiki, you will need to activate your computer's HTTP server. The steps for this vary by operating system; consult documentation specific to your OS for further information.

DokuWiki needs to be hosted on a web server running PHP, a standard plugin for Apache HTTP server. As of the creation of this document, the latest version of DokuWiki requires PHP 7.4. Before proceeding with installation, check to see if your server's software is current—and, if not, update it.

Web hosting

If you choose to set up an online instance of DokuWiki, you will need an account with a web hosting provider. Many *internet service providers* (ISPs) include web hosting as a part of their service packages; there are also a multitude of third-party hosting options available for affordable rates. If you choose to sign up with a hosting provider, verify that your provider allows running PHP, creating subdirectories, and the use of file transfer protocol (FTP).

What is FTP?

File transfer protocol is a widely used method for transferring files from one computer to another, and a simple way of uploading files to a web hosting account.

Popular free FTP clients include FileZilla, Cyberduck, and FireFTP.

Create a directory

Once the host for the wiki has been established, create a dedicated subdirectory for the wiki within your web space's top directory. This will keep the wiki's files separate from any other files on the web server, as well as make it easier to set up further wiki instances should you need more than one.

For example, the file listing for a web hosting account with three instances of DokuWiki—for Project 1, Project 2 and Project 3—might look something like this:

```
./  
  .htaccess  
  index.html  
  /project_1  
  /project_2  
  /project_3
```

4

Installation

1. Download Dokuwiki

Navigate to download.dokuwiki.org and download the latest version of the application. Note that you can reduce the size of your download (and upload to your hosted web space) by deselecting unneeded language files before downloading.

2. Unpack the archive

Once it has finished downloading, double-click the resulting tarball (.tgz) archive to expand it.

3. Upload the files to the wiki directory

Upload the resulting files to your wiki's directory using FTP or your host's web upload interface.

4. Go to install.php

In a web browser, open the install.php file within the wiki's directory. For example, if your web space was hosted at www.mywebpace.com and your files were uploaded to the /wiki directory, you would open install.php by navigating to

<http://www.mywebpace.com/wiki/install.php>

Once this page has loaded, you should see the DokuWiki installer (Figure 1).

5. Choose a name

Enter a title for your wiki (Figure 1A). This will be shown at the top of every page.

DokuWiki Installer

Wiki Name **A**

Enable ACL (recommended)

Superuser **B**

Real name

E-Mail

Password **C**

once again

Initial ACL policy **C**

Allow users to register themselves

Please choose the license you want to put your content under:

CC0 1.0 Universal ^[?]

Public Domain ^[?]

CC Attribution 4.0 International ^[?]

CC Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International ^[?]

GNU Free Documentation License 1.3 ^[?]

CC Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 International ^[?]

CC Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International ^[?]

Do not show any license information

Please, help us to improve the DokuWiki experience:

Once a month, send anonymous usage data to the DokuWiki developers ^[?]

Figure 1

6. Enter admin user information

Enter a superuser (admin) name, real name, email address and password (Figure 1B). These credentials will allow you to log into the wiki to not only edit pages but also change group permissions, install plugins, or access the wiki's other administrative settings.

7. Choose user access levels

If you want other users to be able to edit the wiki, indicate this using the *access control list* (ACL) policy setting drop-down (Figure 1C). Group permissions and access levels can be set or modified later using the wiki's admin tools.

If you wish to be the only user with the ability to create and edit pages, restrict editing to the admin account by selecting "Public Wiki."

8. Choose your wiki's content license

If your wiki will be visible to persons other than yourself, you should choose the Creative Commons license that reflects how you wish users to treat your content. For more information on the rights granted or withheld by the various licenses, visit www.creativecommons.org.

9. Finish set-up

Click on "Save" to complete set-up and go to the welcome page of your wiki.

If you have any issues during the installation process, visit www.dokuwiki.org/install for more detailed information.

5

Start page

When the installer has finished, you should see this page:

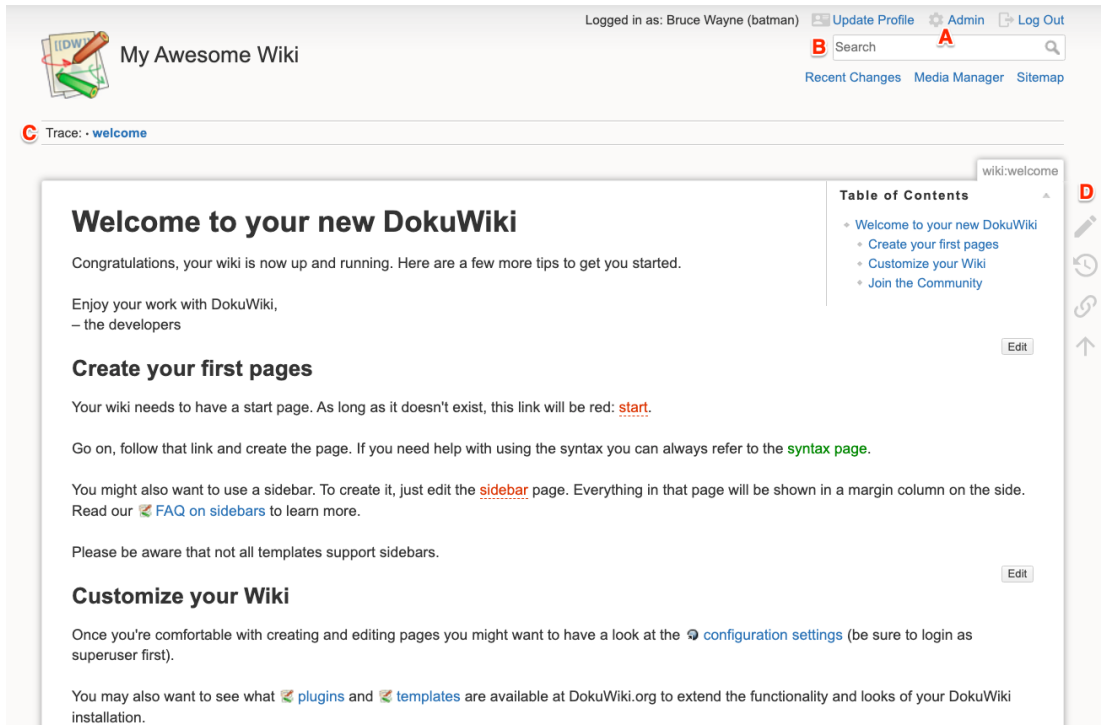


Figure 2

This default start page displays some useful information to help you get started navigating and expanding your new wiki. Also take note of the key links and navigational elements in Figure 2:

- A. The link to the wiki's **Administration Page**. From there, you have access to all the key settings for the wiki, including basic configuration, user access control, customization options and settings for any installed extensions (templates and plugins).
- B. The **search field**, which enables a user to search for text on any page in the wiki.
- C. **Breadcrumb navigation**, which lists the last several pages the user has loaded and offers an easy way to jump back to a previous page.
- D. **Page tools**, including the editing toggle, previous version list, backlinks list, and "back to top" button.

At this point, your wiki is fully enabled and ready to use! The instructions on the start page should give you a basic grasp of how to create your pages and add content. You can find a more comprehensive overview of DokuWiki's markup syntax and other tools in Section 7.

6

Configuration and customization

Once your wiki has been created, you have the opportunity to customize its look and function to best suit your workflow. Two easy modifications you might find helpful include implementing “nice” URLs and installing a template to change the wiki’s look and layout.

Nice URLs

By default, the URLs for DokuWiki pages can be unwieldy. For example:

http://www.mywebsite.com/wiki/doku.php?id=some_amazing_page

This can make tasks such as creating new pages or finding a page by its URL more difficult. Implementing “nice” URLs, which end with just a page’s title, can be accomplished with only a few additional steps.

1. Turn on nice URLs

- A. While logged in as the wiki’s superuser, click on **Admin** in the upper right of any page to go to the Administration page.
- B. From there, click on **Configuration Settings**.
- C. On the Configuration Settings page, scroll down to the **Advanced** settings section.
- D. From the dropdown menu to the right of “Use nice URLs,” select **.htaccess** (Figure 3A).
- E. Check the box next to “Use slash as namespace separator in URLs” (Figure 3B).
- F. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click “Save.”

Advanced	
<small>updatecheck</small> Check for updates and security warnings? DokuWiki needs to contact update.dokuwiki.org for this feature.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<small>userewrite</small> Use nice URLs	<input type="checkbox"/> <small>!</small> <input type="text" value=".htaccess"/> A
<small>useslash</small> Use slash as namespace separator in URLs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B
<small>sepchar</small> Page name word separator	<input type="text" value="_"/>
<small>canonical</small> Use fully canonical URLs	<input type="checkbox"/>
<small>fnencode</small> Method for encoding non-ASCII filenames.	<input type="text" value="url"/> <small>!</small>
<small>autoplural</small> Check for plural forms in links	<input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 3

2. Modify the wiki's .htaccess file

- A. Changes need to be made to the .htaccess file in the wiki's directory; this is a file that tells the web server how to parse URLs in a given directory. Most FTP clients will allow you to edit and save simple text files like this without downloading and re-uploading them.
- B. Using an FTP client (for a remote-hosted wiki) or a text editor (for a local wiki), open the .htaccess file in the wiki's directory and add the following lines at the end:

```

RewriteEngine on

RewriteRule ^_media/(.*)          lib/exe/fetch.php?media=$1  [QSA,L]
RewriteRule ^_detail/(.*)         lib/exe/detail.php?media=$1 [QSA,L]
RewriteRule ^_export/([^/]+)/(.*) doku.php?do=export_$1&id=$2 [QSA,L]
RewriteRule ^$                    doku.php [L]
RewriteCond %{REQUEST_FILENAME}   !-f
RewriteCond %{REQUEST_FILENAME}   !-d
RewriteRule (.*                   doku.php?id=$1 [QSA,L]
RewriteRule ^index.php$          doku.php

```

- C. If your wiki's directory is somewhere other than in the top directory of the web space, add this line, changing /dokuwiki to the path to your wiki's directory:

```

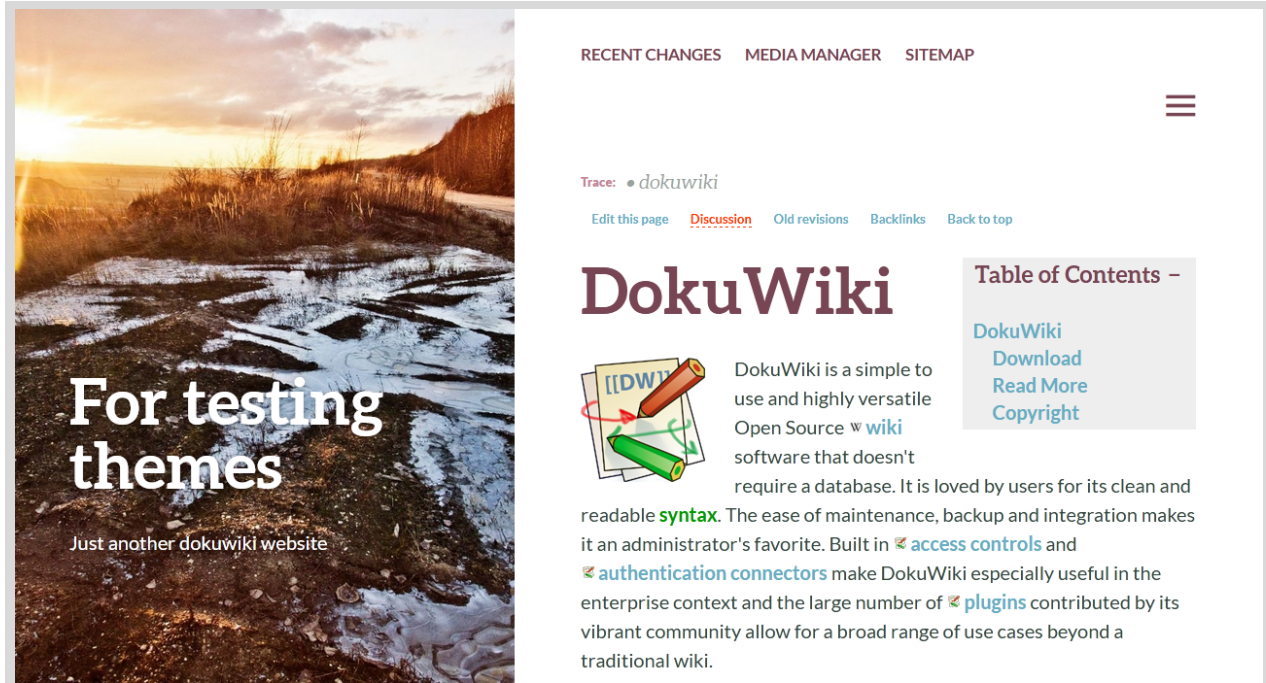
RewriteBase /dokuwiki

```

- D. Save the file and reload your wiki to confirm the change has been made. Your wiki's page URLs should now look like this:

http://www.mywebsite.com/wiki/some_amazing_page

Templates



[Bushwick](#) template by [desbest](#)

Installing a pre-designed template is a fast and easy way to alter the default look of your wiki. Some apply basic changes to fonts and colors, while others alter the wiki's layout and functionality (including adding or removing a sidebar).

Dozens of community-created templates can be found at www.dokuwiki.org/template. If you wish, browse the options and find one that suits your wiki.

To install a wiki template:

1. Click on **Admin** to go to the Administration page.
2. From there, click on **Extension Manager**.
3. Select the **Search and Install** tab.
4. Into the field provided, type the name of the chosen template (or search for "template" for all available options).
5. Once you've located the chosen template, click **Install**.

The appearance of your wiki should update immediately to reflect the chosen template. Bear in mind that some basic elements (such as the edit and admin links) may end up in new locations on the page or be relocated to a menu in some templates.

If you change your mind about the template you've installed, you can view all previously installed templates (including the default) and switch between them from the **Installed Templates** tab of the **Extension Manager**.

Basic style settings, including some page colors and widths, can be further customized by clicking on **Template Style Settings** on the Administration page.

More options

You can customized your wiki even further and extend its functionality by installing DokuWiki plugins, which are discussed in Section 9.

7

Using DokuWiki

Once your wiki is installed and configured, you're ready to start using it. A good first step is to click **Edit** and customize the start page, but quickly you will be ready to begin building out your initial topics in way that gives your worldbuilding project structure.

This section offers a detailed description of how to add and edit your wik, including how to create pages, add and format text, create links, embed media, organize pages into namespaces, and add a sidebar (if your template supports it).

Strategies for structuring your worldbuilding project and filling it with detail are discussed in Section 8.

Adding a page

Creating new pages for a wiki may feel counter-intuitive at first. Unlike a word processor, which generates pages as the user types (or when a page break is inserted), wiki software like DokuWiki gives a user the option to create a new page only when the user navigates to the URL for a non-existent page. What this means, in essence, is that one generally creates a link to a topic first, *then the topic itself*.

- **With default URLs**

Creating a new page with default URLs requires adding a link to a new topic on an existing page. Clicking that link then takes the user to a placeholder URL, where they have the option to create a new page for that topic.

Links to nonexistent pages are always shown in a different color (red by default) than links to existing pages.

- **With nice URLs**

Nice URLs add another method of creating a new page: appending the page title to the current directory or namespace URL. For instance, in order to create the new topic *bananas*, the user could simply navigate to www.mywebsite.com/wiki/bananas and begin adding content.

Adding or editing content

Once you've created a page for a given topic, content can be added by clicking the edit button to bring up the text editor (Figure 4), which includes buttons to alter text style and formatting, indent text, create headings, insert horizontal rules and links, and so forth.

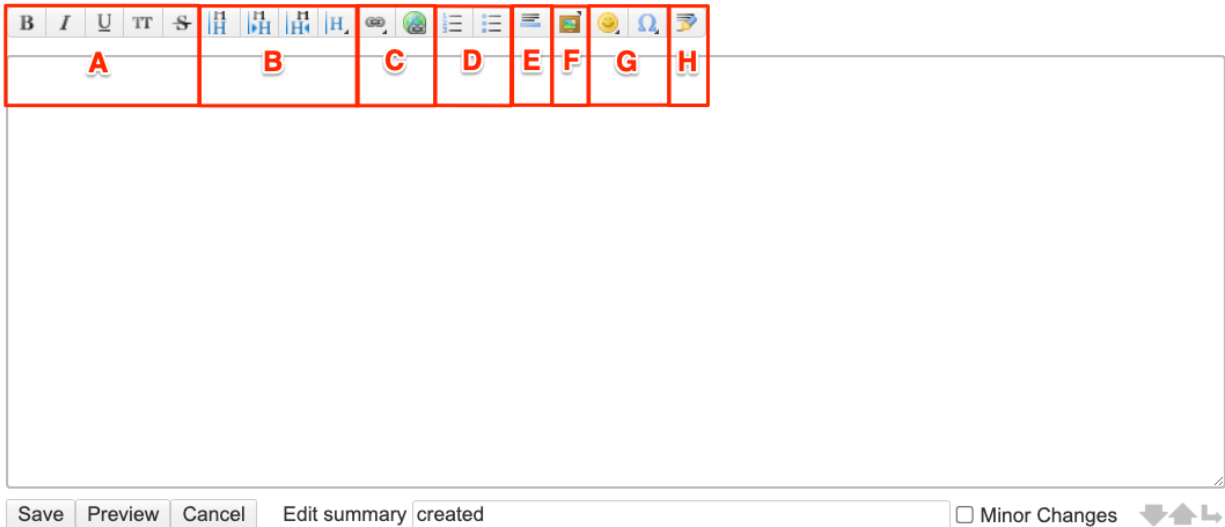


Figure 4

In addition to the text entry area, DokuWiki's editor includes a button bar with shortcuts for a number of formatting and input options, including:

- A. Basic formatting (**bold**, *italic*, underline, monospaced font and ~~striketrough~~)
- B. Heading options
- C. Internal and external links
- D. Ordered and unordered lists
- E. Horizontal rules
- F. Media embeds
- G. Emoji and special characters
- H. A signature stamp (the author's name with date and time)

The user can preview any changes before saving, and add a summary message for a page's change log, if desired.

DokuWiki uses a custom Markdown-like syntax that enables a user to format text as it is typed, as well as insert HTML elements such as lists, tables, links and images. This section will describe how this syntax is used and provide examples of the resulting content.

Basic formatting

Simple text styling is implemented by placing the appropriate characters before and after the chosen text.

Editor	Display
Set **bold text** within double asterisks	Set bold text within double asterisks
Set <i>//italic text//</i> within double slashes	Set <i>italic text</i> within double slashes
Set <u>__underlined text__</u> within double underscores	Set <u>underlined text</u> within double underscores
Set <code><sub>subscript text</sub></code> within subscript tags	Set _{subscript text} within subscript tags
Set <code><sup>superscript text</sup></code> within superscript tags	Set ^{superscript text} within superscript tags
Set <code>strikethrough text</code> within deleted tags	Set strikethrough text within deleted tags

Paragraphs and line breaks

DokuWiki starts a new paragraph after any blank line. You can also force a line break by inserting two backslashes at the end of a line.

Editor	Display
My first paragraph.	My first paragraph.
My second paragraph.	My second paragraph.
One line\ Another line	One line Another line
A new paragraph	A new paragraph

Headings

Text enclosed within sets of two or more equal signs ('=') are interpreted by DokuWiki as a heading. The level of heading is determined by the number of equal signs before and after the heading text, as follows:

Editor	Display
===== Heading 1 =====	Heading 1
===== Heading 2 =====	Heading 2
===== Heading 3 =====	Heading 3
===== Heading 4 =====	Heading 4
===== Heading 5 =====	Heading 5

In addition, pages with three or more levels of headings will generate their own table of contents unless `~~NOTOC~~` is included somewhere in the page's text.

Links

Links are created by enclosing text in double square brackets. If that text matches the title of an existing page, the link will take the user to that page. If the text does not match an existing page, clicking on it will send the user to an empty page with the chosen title and give the user an opportunity to add content. Styling of a link will vary depending on whether its destination exists.

Editor	Display
[[link to non-existent page]]	link to non-existent page
[[link to existing page]]	link to existing page


Custom link text

At times, you may wish to link to a page using text other than that page's title. In this case, within the brackets, add the target page title, then a pipe character and the desired link text.

Editor	Display
[[link page a fancy bit of text]]	a fancy bit of text

External links

Any properly formatted web address included in text will be automatically converted into a live external link by DokuWiki.

Editor	Display
www.wikipedia.org	 www.wikipedia.org

External links can also be inserted using the same format as internal links, but with a URL in place of a page title.

Editor	Display
[[http://www.dokuwiki.org]]	http://www.dokuwiki.org
[[http://www.dokuwiki.org DokuWiki's website]]	DokuWiki's website

Lists

Creating a list in the editor is as easy as starting a line with the appropriate set of characters. Whether a list is ordered or unordered, a new list entry will be created on each new line following and existing list item.

Ordered list

To create an ordered (numbered) list, start a line with two spaces followed by a dash ('-'). To create a list item one level lower than the previous one, add two additional spaces to the line.

Editor	Display
- Superman - Batman - Robin - Dick Grayson - Wonder Woman	1. Superman 2. Batman a. Robin I. Dick Grayson 3. Wonder Woman

Unordered list

To create an unordered (bulleted) list, start a line with two spaces followed by an asterisk ('**'). Again, to create a list item one level lower than the previous one, add two additional spaces to the line.

Editor	Display
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * X-Men * Avengers * Captain America * Sam Wilson * Defenders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • X-Men • Avengers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Captain America • Sam Wilson • Defenders

Tables

Tables are a useful, if complex and oft-maligned, tool for organizing information on the web. Creating tables in DokuWiki's markup syntax is faster and easier than coding them manually in HTML, and offers enough flexibility to display most kinds of tabulated data.

Tables are comprised of individual cells, which have specific formatting according to function. (Header cells, usually found along the top of a table, have different background colors and text formatting than general cells.)

In order to generate a row of cells divided into columns, enclose blocks of column header content with caret (^) characters and normal cell content with pipe (|) characters, like so:

Editor		
<code>^ Header 1 ^ Header 2 ^ Header 3 ^ Some content More content Still more content </code>		
Display		
Header 1	Header 2	Header 3
Some content	More content	Still more content

Headers and normal cells can occupy the same row. Any cell in a table can be designated a header by making its first enclosing character a caret.

Editor		
A normal cell ^ Header 2 ^ Header 3 ^ Some content More content Still more content		
Display		
A normal cell	Header 2	Header 3
Header 1	More content	Still more content

Cell alignment

You can set a cell's contents alignment by inserting two or more spaces between cell separator characters and a cell's content.

To left-align a cell, insert at least two spaces following its content and before the enclosing character. (Note: cells are left-aligned by default.) To right-align a cell, insert at least two spaces *before* its content. To center a cell, insert at least two spaces on either side of its content.

Editor		
Left-aligned Centered Right-aligned		
Display		
Left-aligned	Centered	Right-aligned

Empty cells

If there are only spaces between two separator characters, that cell will be left empty.

Editor		
Item #1 Item #2 Item #3 Content More content		
Display		
Item #1	Item #2	Item #3
Content		More content

Column spans

However, leaving no space between separators merges that cell with the previous cell, creating a column span.

Editor		
^ September ^ August ^ November ^ Dry Wet Warm Cool Sunny Partly sunny Cloudy		
Display		
September	October	November
Dry		Wet
Warm	Cool	
Sunny	Partly sunny	Cloudy

Row spans

A row span (multiple cells merged vertically) can be created by filling cells beneath the first of the span with triple colons ('::').

Editor		
<pre> ^ Pizza ^ French Toast ^ Onion Rings ^ Breakfast Brunch Lunch ::: Lunch Dinner Dinner </pre>		
Display		
Pizza	French Toast	Onion Rings
Breakfast	Brunch	
Lunch		Lunch
Dinner		Dinner

Tables in action

Here is an example of a table utilizing all of the syntax previously described.

Editor		
<pre> ^Left ^ Center ^ Right^ Left-aligned Rowspan Centered ::: ^ Header ^ Colspan </pre>		
Display		
Left	Center	Right
Left-aligned	Rowspan	
Centered		Header
Colspan		

Special formatting

Quotation

In order to set off a block of text as a quotation or reply (when displaying threaded discussion, for instance), place angle brackets ('>') at the beginning of a line to denote the depth of the quotation.

Editor	Display
A statement > First reply >> First reply to the first reply	A statement First reply First reply to the first reply

Unformatted text

In instances where text needs to remain unformatted—that is to say, not converted into Markup by DokuWiki using the rules described in this section—surround the text with double percentage signs.

Editor	Display
This is normal //text//. %%This is unformatted //text//.%%	This is normal text . This is unformatted //text//.

Code block

A code block is similar to unformatted text in that it ignored any text markup. But code is also displayed in a monospace font within an indented box with all whitespace preserved. This can be useful when providing a long excerpt, as it stands out from the regular text around it.

In order to create a code block, indent the beginning of a line with two spaces. For multi-line blocks, either indent each line or enclose all of the text in `<code>` or `<file>` tags.

Editor	Display
This is a single line code block.	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">This is a single line code block.</div>

Editor	Display
<pre><code>This is a multi-line code block. Notice the <code> tags surrounding it.</code></pre>	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; background-color: #f9f9f9;"> This is a multi-line code block. Notice the <code> tags surrounding it. </div>
<pre><file> This is a multi-line code block. The <file> tags can be anywhere before and after the text. </file></pre>	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; background-color: #f9f9f9;"> This is a multi-line code block. The <file> tags can be anywhere before and after the text. </div>

Horizontal rules

To insert a horizontal rule, type five or more consecutive dashes on a blank line.

Editor	Display
Something important ----- Something completely different	<hr/> Something important <hr/> Something completely different

Footnotes

In order to create a footnote, enclose text within double parentheses. The footnote next will be moved to the bottom of the page and replaced inline with a numerical reference link.

Editor	Display
Just some ordinary text((A piece of important information)). More text.	<hr/> Just some ordinary text ¹⁾ . More text. ¹⁾ A piece of important information

Media

Media files—images, audio or movies—can easily be embedded using the media embed button at the top of the editor (Figure 4F). Clicking on this will open a new window displaying a list of everything currently in your wiki's media library (Figure 5). Within this window, you can upload files to your wiki, preview them, embed them on the current page or delete them.

To embed a file from your wiki's media library into the current page, select the desired file. If the file is an image, you will be given the option of linking to the original file as well as choosing the image's alignment and size.

To upload a new media file, use the selector in the Media Files window to choose a file from your computer, then click **Upload**. You may have to refresh the window after the upload is complete.

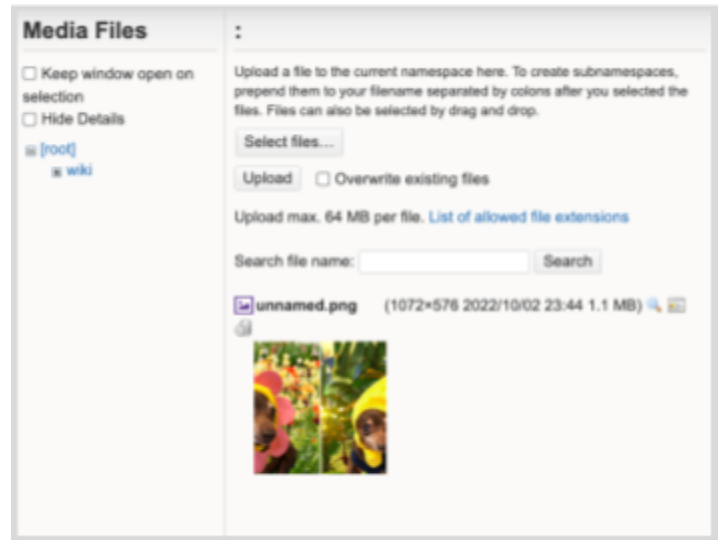




Figure 5

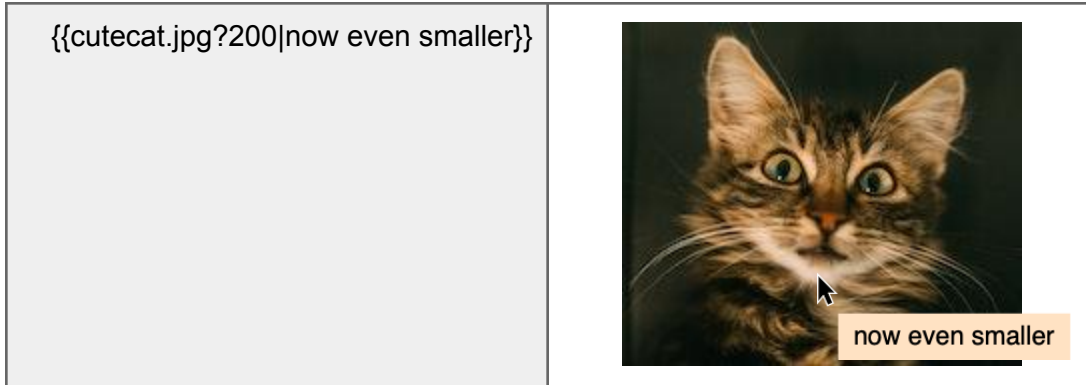
Media file embeds will be shown in the markup as the file's name between double curly braces. To insert a custom caption (which appears as a tooltip when a user hovers on the embed), add a pipe character and the caption text after the filename.

Editor	Display
<pre> {{cutecat.jpg}} </pre>	

<code>{{cutecat.jpg one cute cat}}</code>	
---	--

An image can be resized in the markup by adding a question mark ('?') along with one or two dimensions: if one number is given, the image will be resized to that given width; if two numbers are given, the image will be resized or cropped depending whether those numbers have the same aspect ratio as the original.

Editor	Display
<code>{{cutecat.jpg?200}}</code>	
<code>{{cutecat.jpg?100x100}}</code>	



A file external to the wiki can be embedded by inserting its full URL in place of a filename. Resizing and captioning works the same for these files as it does for those uploaded to the wiki's media manager.

Editor	Display
<pre>{{https://www.dokuwiki.org/lib/tpl/dokuwiki/images/logo.png}}</pre>	

Sitemap

Another useful tool in DokuWiki is the sitemap, which can be reached by clicking on the **Sitemap** link in the upper left of the wiki (Figure 6). This special page contains a list of links to every other page in your wiki, sorted alphabetically by namespace.

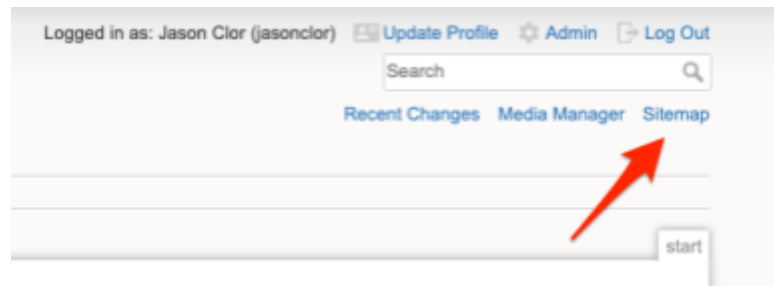


Figure 6

Namespaces

It can be useful, under certain circumstances, to organize pages into separate but distinct groups. For instance, if one were creating a wiki with descriptions of each of the nations of South America, with pages for the geography, history, economy, and culture of each, it would normally be impossible to have two or more “History” topics, as every page title must be unique. But by using *namespaces*, each nation could have its own list of titles, including “History.”

A namespace functions like a subdirectory within the main wiki's directory without requiring the user to create this directory or install a new instance of DokuWiki. Creating one is as simple as giving the new space a name (example: "Cascadia") and appending that name along with a colon (':') character in front of the title in a link to a new page. For example:

```
[[cascadia:history|Cascadia history]]
```

is a separate and unique page from

```
[[history|History]]
```

In this system, any link without a namespace designated (or with only the colon preceding the page title) points to a page with that title *in the current namespace*: that is to say, in the namespace of the page where the link is found.

Sidebar

If the template you are using for your wiki features a sidebar—a list of links displayed on every page—you can customize its contents. To do so, navigate to <http://www.mywebsite.com/wiki/sidebar.php> (or <http://www.mywebsite.com/wiki/sidebar> if you have nice URLs turned on) and use the same editing tool and syntax you would on any other page of the wiki.

A sidebar is most useful when it contains links to pages you use most extensively, such as high-level topics with lots of links to more specific information. Inevitably, the worldbuilding workflow will determine what sidebar links are best for a particular wiki, although creators who expect others to contribute or utilize the wiki as a reference may have a more general setup in mind.

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Mapping your world

Now that you have a working instance of DokuWiki running and understand the basics of adding content, you're ready to commence your quest! But, if you're a newcomer to worldbuilding, before you begin the process of assembling the lore of your setting, you may be asking: *where do I start?*

Think about your worldbuilding project as you would a research project: the only real difference is that you'll be creating most of the information rather than drawing from outside sources. In order for the end product to be useful, it needs to have a well-defined purpose and be detailed, accurate and well organized.

Audience matters

In any documentation project, the primary factor determining that project's structure and level of detail is its intended audience. A reader's familiarity with the material and their level of technical expertise will dictate the ideal level of depth; someone new to a genre will require either more explanation or less detail than something deeply familiar with its idiosyncrasies.

Even when writing for yourself, you need to think about what level of detail is ideal for the project. If basic notes and outlines will be sufficient, resist the urge to write extended passages describing every detail of a topic. But if that kind of depth will benefit your work, take the time to make sure your entries are consistent in their level of detail.

Define your goal

As with any writing project, the focus and structure of your worldbuilding will depend upon its ultimate goal. Is your wiki intended as a personal reference, or will it be used by others? Is it a way for you—the creator—to develop a clear mental image of the setting before embarking on your project? A record kept to help maintain consistency during writing? Or a reference to be used by others during collaboration? Each of these use cases will have different emphases and requirements.

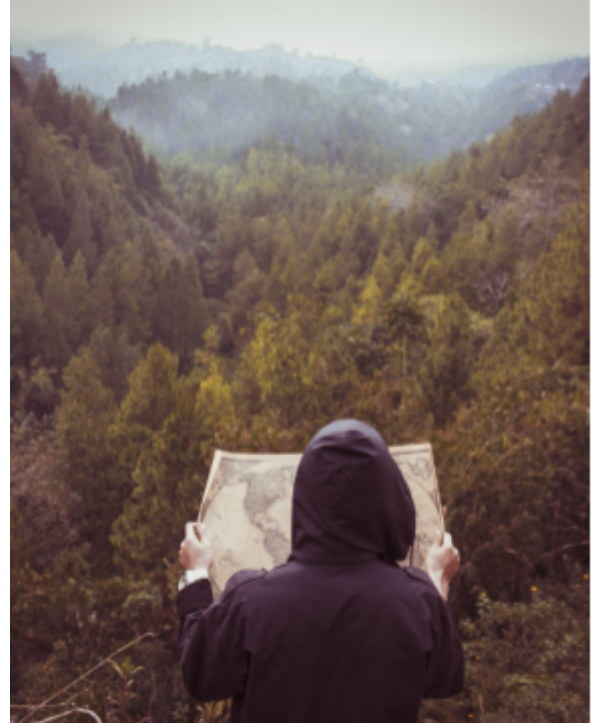


Image: Muhammad Haikal Sjukri

Prioritize

Let's face it: creating an entire world is a daunting task. Blessed though you may be with a vibrant imagination, keeping all the details you generate organized in way that renders them useful is a challenge unto itself. Because of this, it's to your advantage, before you begin, to think about ways to structure your worldbuilding.



Image: Nerene Grobler

Find your keys

A good starting point is to identify those key topics that will “unlock” the rest of your project. Consider key topics to be category headings under which the rest of your project's details will fall. Ask yourself: *what are the most important features that make this world unique?*

For a fantasy setting founded upon millennia of history and conflict, a timeline of past events would be a good starting feature. For a far-future science fiction setting, on the other hand, specific technologies that shape the structure of society and the course of events could be most important. If geography is vital to a setting, it would make sense to include a map of the the world on one of its highest-level pages.

Once you've defined your key topics, it should be clearer how each subsequent topic should be sorted. Key topics work best when they serve as access points to the rest of your entire project. This will make what might become a large and unweildy wiki much simpler to navigate.

Divide and conquer

As you flesh out your key topics, use headings to break pages down into sections. DokuWiki will conveniently create a linked table of contents for you if a page contains three or more levels of headings, and you can link directly to these heading anchors by appending a hash ('#') character and the heading name at the end of a link. For example:

```
[[cuisine#snack_foods|Snack foods]]
```

Organize

A big factor in how smoothly your creative process proceeds is whether or not you have an idea beforehand of how your pages will be structured. Uniformity throughout your wiki will help the user find information more quickly.

Choose a layout

You can increase the usability of your wiki by using efficient visual design. Lists and tables can also be used to organize details into easily digestible chunks. Use horizontal rules to provide additional visual separation between sections of text.

If your wiki is encyclopedic in form, it could benefit you to create a *template* for new pages. A template is markdown that is added automatically to every new page. With a template, you can automatically insert a title, default headings, and other useful markup, speeding up the creative process.

In order to create a new page template, add your markup to a plain text file named `_template.txt` and save it (using FTP) to the wiki's main directory. For instance, if you wanted a page to automatically have its title set as a top-level heading with the sub-headings Description and History, your file would look like this:



```

===== @PAGE@ =====

===== Description =====

===== History =====

```

_template.txt

When a new page is created, `@PAGE@` will be replaced with the page's title. For a list of other replacement codes, visit https://www.dokuwiki.org/namespace_templates.

General to specific

A wiki works best when constructed with small, specific topics built atop broader, more general ones. Because of how DokuWiki pages are normally created—from links embedded on existing pages—it's more efficient to begin by filling out your key topics, adding as much detail as possible, before moving to more specific ones.

Plant seeds

That isn't to say you should ignore possible avenues of exploration. As you fill out a topic, you'll come up with details that beg for expansion: names, locations, events, organizations, and so forth. Make a habit of creating new page links for such details as you go, so that when you've finished with a key topic, you can immediately flesh out those links while they're fresh in your mind.

Branch out

Because a wiki can contain as many pages as you need, it makes sense to limit the size of individual pages to what can be read within a minute or two. Once a subheading becomes large enough to occupy a page of its own, consider creating a link and copying over its content. Large media files, such as groups of images, maps and the link, can be placed on their own pages to reduce clutter.

Expand

The flexibility of a wiki and the ease of modifying its structure mean it will evolve as you build your document.

Sort and separate

If your world contains multiple, multi-topic entities such as kingdoms, religions or cultures, namespaces can be used to separate their individual topics from one another and prevent the need for overly-complicated naming schemes.

Embrace change

As you develop your wiki, you're bound to encounter situations where the details of one or more topics needs to change. The advantage of having a page for each topic is that changes are centralized—as long as information isn't duplicated, all links to the topic will always show the most up-to-date version of its page.

So ... don't be afraid to make changes! DokuWiki keeps detailed versioning information (which can be accessed by clicking the **Older versions** link on a page) which is updated every time you click **Save** in the editor. If you make a mistake or change your mind later, you can easily revert a page back to a previous version.

As already pointed out, DokuWiki's extensive toolset can be expanded by the installation of extensions (using DokuWiki's built-in Extension Manager, as described under the Part 6 section, Templates). The following are several open-source plugins that provide functionality of particular use to worldbuilders.

Pagelist

One useful plugin is **Pagelist**, which can sort and format a list of page links for display in tabular format. In addition to page title, columns for creation date, user, tags (see the next plugin below) and other information can be included:

Page	Date	User	Tags
Lady Jessica	2022/10/07 19:06	Jason Clor	character , house atreides , bene gesserit

The list is generated by enclosing an unordered list of page links with a set of `<pagelist>` tags, with flags added to the leading tag to define columns and sorting options. For example, the listing above was generated by this code:

```
<pagelist&header&tags>
  * [[some_amazing_page]]
</pagelist>
```

For more information about **Pagelist**, visit <https://www.dokuwiki.org/plugin:pagelist>.

Tags

Tags are another powerful tool for sorting and finding topics. By tagging pages in your wiki, you effectively sort them into categories, and clicking on any tag will generate a list of every page in that category.

You might, for instance, tag every character's page with *character*, generating a convenient list of all characters in your wiki. Tags can be as specific as you like—you might also tag characters as *protagonist*, *antagonist* or *background*—and each page can have as many tags as you care to add.

The plugin that enables this is called—conveniently enough—**Tag Plugin**, which was developed by Michael Hamann, Gina Häussge, Christopher Smith, Michael Klier and Esther Brunner. (Note, the **Tag Plugin** requires **Pagelist**.)

After installing it via the Extension Manager, you'll be able to tag pages by adding code to your text in the following format:

```
{{tag>one_or_more_tags}}
```

where the text following the angle bracket is a space-separated list of tags. Tags with multiple words should use underscores in place of spaces or be placed within quotation marks. For instance:

```
{{tag>character House_Atreides "Bene Gesserit"}}
```

The code defining the tags will not be shown on the page. Instead, tags will be listed as clickable links beneath a horizontal rule, like this:



Clicking on any tag will take the user to a page listing all topics with that tag.

The plugin also recognizes other codes that can be used to insert tag-related information into a wiki page.

Topic

`{{topic>tags}}` lists all pages with the given tag or tags. The command can be given a series of logic arguments to include or exclude any number of tags, which makes it capable of complex filtering. See the plugin's documentation page for more details.

Searchtags

`{{searchtags>tags}}` generates a search field that can be used to interactively filter tags and receive a list of the pages that result:

Namespaces Use logic AND

Include	Exclude	Tags
<input type="checkbox"/> +	<input type="checkbox"/> -	bene_gesserit [1]
<input type="checkbox"/> +	<input type="checkbox"/> -	character [1]
<input type="checkbox"/> +	<input type="checkbox"/> -	house_atreides [1]

Count

`{{count>tag}}` lists the number of pages using a specific tag or tags, and can output counts for all current tags. For syntax, see the plugin's documentation.

Tagpage

`{{tagpage>tag}}` offers a way to manually link to a tag's page (with its list of all pages using that tag) without inserting the tag onto the current page.

For more detailed information about the **Tag Plugin** and its syntax, visit <https://www.dokuwiki.org/plugin:tag>.

Autolink

The **Autolink** plugin adds universal, automated hyperlinking of pages configured within its special interface. In this way, you can make sure specific topics are always linked: important names, places or terms, for example. Every instance of every topic listed in Autolink will be hyperlinked to its corresponding page, which creates a highly-navigable, cross-referenced wiki. Using the plugin's special syntax, you can also account for alternate spellings, aliases and plural references to a topic.

For more information about the Autolink plugin, visit <https://www.dokuwiki.org/plugin:autolink4>.

DokuWiki is a well-maintained application offering a plethora of useful tools for a creator who needs to collect and organize large amounts of information. Its flexibility enables each user to set up their wiki and customize their toolset to suit their work style.

Recommended reading

For further insight into the process of worldbuilding, the author recommends the following publications:

- [On Writing and Worldbuilding: Volume I](#) by Timothy Hickson.
- [On Writing and Worldbuilding: Volume II](#) by Timothy Hickson.
- [The Kobold Guide to Worldbuilding](#) by Wolfgang Baur. Written with dungeon masters and game designers in mind, the Kobold Guide offers special insight into creating narrative hooks for play.

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About the author

Jason Clor is a technical writer by trade and science fiction writer by avocation. Some of his work can be found at [Lower Decks Press](#), where he is both an editor and contributor to short story anthologies and digital publications.